



MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Wendy Block, Director of Health Policy and Human Resources

Date: September 9, 2009

Re: MI Chamber Opposes Health Care Mandates (HBs 5156-57, 59-62)

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform you of the Michigan Chamber's opposition to any expansion of government mandates on the health care benefits, including the legislation to mandate coverage for contraceptives, infertility treatments and/or pap smears (HBs 5156-57 and HBs 5159-62).

As you are well aware, Michigan job providers continue to struggle beneath the burden of skyrocketing health care costs, which have increased at near double-digit rates for the past six years. In fact, our members are again reporting that their insurance premiums rose by double-digit or near double-digit rates again in 2009. These cost increases alone threaten the availability and affordability of private employer-provided coverage for working Michiganders – and, although well intended, HBs 5156-57 and HBs 5159-62 may actually make this situation even worse.

Ultimately, we believe employers and employees should be able to decide, free of governmental interference, what diseases, conditions and benefits are included in their health insurance coverage. They know best what they can afford and should have a broad range of options to tailor their health insurance plan to the characteristics of their workforce. After all, why should a business be forced to pay for a benefit that isn't likely to be utilized or pay the cost of covering a condition that prices it out of the marketplace?

Piling on more government-imposed health care mandates is the wrong answer at the wrong time. Instead of picking winners and losers, we urge you to focus your efforts on improving access to health care and stabilizing - if not lowering - these costs.

We stand prepared to work with you in achieving this critical goal. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 517/371-7678 if you have any questions.